

Amendments to the Claims

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims:

1. - 68. (cancelled)

69. (new) A method of voice communication concerning a local entity wherein:

upon a user approaching the local entity, a voice service associated with the entity but separately hosted, is activated and presents voice output to the user; and

the voice service coordinates operation of functionality located at the local entity with said voice output by means of control data passed from the voice service to said functionality via user-carried equipment and a short-range wireless link between the equipment and said functionality.

70. (new) A method according to claim 69, wherein the voice output of the voice service is output via headphones of the user equipment.

71. (new) A method according to claim 70, wherein said functionality comprises a mouth representation device associated with the local entity and arranged to present a mouth representation that is movable in dependence on the control data from the voice service whereby to operate in synchronism with voice output from the voice service.

72. (new) A method according to claim 71, wherein the mouth representation device is incorporated into a beacon device located at or near the local entity and communicating with the user's equipment over said short-range wireless link.

73. (new) A method according to claim 71, wherein the mouth representation device is electro-mechanical in form with movable mouth parts operated by electrically-powered actuators in dependence on said control data.

74. (new) A method according to claim 71, wherein the mouth representation device comprises an electronic display for displaying a mouth image.

75. (new) A method according to claim 69, wherein sound output is through multiple sound output devices spaced from said local entity and controlled so that the sound appears to the user to emanate from the location of said local entity independently of the user's position and head orientation relative to the entity.

76. (new) A method according to claim 75, wherein said multiple sound output devices are headphones worn by the user, excitation of the headphones being controlled to take account of the relative positions of the user and entity and rotations of the user's head.

77. (new) A method according to claim 75, wherein said multiple sound output devices are loudspeakers associated with the locality of the entity rather than with the user and connected with the voice service through the communications

infrastructure, excitation of the loudspeakers being controlled in dependence on the relative positions of the user and entity.

78. (new) A system for enabling verbal communication on behalf of a local entity with a nearby user, the system comprising:

user equipment to be carried by a user and comprising a wireless communication subsystem;

a communications infrastructure comprising at least a wireless network for communicating with the wireless communication subsystem of the user equipment;

an audio output arrangement forming part of the user equipment, or located in the locality of the local entity and connected to the communication infrastructure;

an audio input arrangement forming part of the user's equipment, or located in the locality of said entity and connected to said communications infrastructure;

controllable functionality associated with the local entity;

a short-range-communications arrangement comprising complimentary elements at the local entity and in the user equipment for establishing a short range wireless link between the user equipment and said controllable functionality; and

a voice service arrangement associated with the entity but separately hosted, the voice service arrangement being operative to present voice output to the user equipment upon the user approaching the local entity and to coordinate operation of said functionality with said voice output by means of control data passed from the voice service to said functionality via said short-range-communications arrangement.

79. (new) A system according to claim 78, wherein said audio output arrangement comprises headphones forming part of the user equipment, said controllable functionality comprising a mouth representation device associated with the local entity and arranged to present a mouth representation that is movable in dependence on the control data from the voice service whereby to operate in synchronism with voice output from the voice service.

80. (new) A system according to claim 79, wherein the mouth representation device is electro-mechanical in form with movable mouth parts, said controllable functionality further comprising electrically-powered actuators for moving said mouth parts.

81. (new) A system according to claim 79, wherein the mouth representation device comprises an electronic display for displaying a mouth image.

82. (new) A system according to claim 78, wherein said audio output arrangement comprises multiple sound output devices spaced from said local entity, and a controller for controlling excitation of these devices such as to produce a sound output that it appears to the user to emanate from the location of said local entity independently of the user's position and head orientation relative to the entity.

83. (new) A system according to claim 82, wherein said multiple sound output devices are headphones worn by the user, the controller being arranged to control excitation of the headphones in dependence on the relative positions of the user and entity and rotations of the user's head.

84. (new) A system according to claim 82, wherein said multiple sound output devices are loudspeakers associated with the locality of the entity rather than with the user and connected with the voice service through the communications infrastructure, the controller being arranged to control excitation of the loudspeakers in dependence on the relative positions of the user and entity.

85. (new) A method of voice communication concerning a local entity wherein:

upon a user approaching the local entity, a beacon device located at the local entity passes entity-related data over a short-range wireless link to user-carried equipment, the entity-related data comprising voice-service contact data identifying a voice service associated with the local entity but separately hosted, and parameter data indicative of a current state of the local entity;

the voice-service contact data is used by the user-carried equipment to contact the voice service and pass it said parameter data; and

the voice service presents voice output to the service, the parameter data being used by the voice service in determining its voice output.

86. (new) A method according to claim 85, wherein the voice output provided from the service is dependent on the orientation of the local entity as perceived from the user's current location.

87. (new) A method according to claim 85, wherein the voice output provided from the service is dependent on the user's orientation relative to the entity.

88. (new) A method according to claim 85, wherein the voice output provided from the service is dependent on the user's line of approach or departure relative to the entity.

89. (new) A system for enabling verbal communication on behalf of a local entity with a nearby user, the system comprising:

user equipment to be carried by a user and comprising a wireless communication subsystem;

a communications infrastructure comprising at least a wireless network for communicating with the wireless communication subsystem of the user equipment;

an audio output arrangement forming part of the user equipment, or located in the locality of the local entity and connected to the communication infrastructure;

an audio input arrangement forming part of the user's equipment, or located in the locality of said entity and connected to said communications infrastructure;

a short-range-communications arrangement comprising complimentary elements at the local entity and in the user equipment for establishing a short range wireless link between the user equipment and the entity;

a voice service arrangement associated with the entity but separately hosted, the voice service arrangement being operative to present voice output to the user equipment upon the user approaching the local entity; and

a beacon device located at the local entity for passing entity-related data over the short-range-communications arrangement to the user equipment upon the user approaching the local entity, the entity-related data comprising voice-service contact data identifying the voice service and parameter data indicative of a current state of the local entity; wherein

the voice-service contact data is used by the user equipment to contact the voice service and pass it said parameter data; and

the voice service presents voice output to the user equipment, the parameter data being used by the voice service in determining its voice output.

90. (new) A system according to claim 89, further comprising an arrangement for determining the orientation of the local entity as perceived from the user's current location, the voice service being operative to condition its output in dependence on the determined orientation of the local entity.

91. (new) A system according to claim 89, further comprising an arrangement for determining the orientation of the user relative to the entity, the voice service being operative to condition its output in dependence on the user's determined orientation.

92. (new) A system according to claim 89, further comprising an arrangement for determining the line of approach or departure of the user relative to the entity, the voice service being operative to condition its output in dependence on the user's line of approach or departure.